

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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State Dept. review
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T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE 051350Z OCT 72 VIA CAS CHANNELS (BUNKER)
FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0180 IMMEDIATE
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER
REF: WHS 2209

1. ON RECEIPT OF REFERENCED MESSAGE THIS MORNING, I IMMEDIATELY ASKED FOR APPOINTMENT WITH THIEU THROUGH NHA AND CONFIRMED REQUEST BY NOTE. HE HAD CALLED IN ALL CORPS COMMANDERS FOR DAY LONG MEETING AND I WAS NOT ABLE TO REACH HIM UNTIL 1730 THIS AFTERNOON.
2. I BEGAN BY SAYING THAT I WANTED TO HAVE A VERY FRANK TALK WITH HIM, THAT AS ALLIES AND FRIENDS IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT WE WORK OUT OUR PROBLEMS TOGETHER AND THAT CLEARLY WE WERE AT A DIFFICULT POINT. THE FACT IS THAT HIS REACTION TO OUR NEGOTIATING PROBLEMS HAS BEEN EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTING TO PRESIDENT NIXON. THE POSITION WHICH HE AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE TAKEN IN OPPOSITION TO THESE PROPOSALS HAS MADE IMMENSELY MORE DIFFICULT OUR JOINT EFFORT TO MOVE IN A WAY THAT WOULD ENSURE A NON-COMMUNIST STRUCTURE IN SOUTH VIET-NAM.
3. AS GENERAL HAIG HAD MENTIONED, WE HAVE HAD TWO OBJECTIVES IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS: A) TO ASSURE THAT ANY SOLUTION WILL PROVIDE FOR A CONTINUANCE OF THE GVN AND THAT IT WILL BE IN CONTROL OF THE REALITIES OF POWER; AND B) TO BE IN A POSITION TO CONDUCT THE TALKS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT OUR COUNTER-PROPOSALS WILL ASSURE THAT THE REALITIES OF POWER WILL REMAIN IN THE HANDS OF THE GVN AND ENSURE ITS SURVIVAL.
4. I SAID THAT AS THIEU KNEW, WE HAD SCHEDULED A PRIVATE MEETING TO BEGIN ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, AND WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PROCEED WITH IT. WE WILL, HOWEVER, MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO CONCENTRATE ON THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL THAT ARE NOT IN DISPUTE BETWEEN US, I.E., THE SECURITY ASPECTS. LV WILL DEAL VERY SPECIFICALLY WITH THE MILITARY PROVISIONS TO SEE WHETHER WE CAN OBTAIN RECIPROCAL ASSURANCE OF WITHDRAWALS FROM LAOS, CAMBODIA, AND SOUTH VIET-NAM. SINCE WE DO NOT EXPECT THE MEETING TO SUCCEED, WE HOPE THUS TO HAVE A BASIS FOR CONTINUING ON OUR COURSE. I SAID THAT IF THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING ARE SUFFICIENT TO JUSTIFY YOUR COMING TO SAIGON, YOU WILL DO SO, BUT THAT IN ANY CASE YOU WILL SEND AN IMMEDIATE REPORT TO ME FOR TRANSMITTAL TO HIM.
5. I THEN SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT WISHED ME TO MAKE CLEAR THE CONSEQUENCES OF A PUBLIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN US. IN HIS VIEW THIS WOULD LEAD TO COMPLETE DISASTER. OUR ONLY OPTION IN THAT EVENT WOULD BE A UNILATERAL DISENGAGEMENT. THE PRESIDENT ALSO WISHED ME TO REITERATE WHAT YOU HAD SAID IN EXPLAINING OUR STRATEGY WHEN YOU WERE HERE IN AUGUST, THAT OUR CONCERN IS NOT WITH THE EFFECTS ON OUR ELECTION, BUT WITH BUILDING A PLATFORM-CREATING A POSITION - WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO TAKE THE KIND OF ACTION WE WANT IN THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD. SHOULD THERE BE A PUBLIC CONFRONTATION WITH US NOW, IT WILL BE ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE EVEN TO MAINTAIN THE PRESENT LEVEL OF OUR MILITARY ACTION AFTER THE ELECTION, MUCH LESS TO STEP IT UP. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT COULD ONLY RESULT IN NEGATING TEN YEARS OF EFFORT AND THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS WHICH

6. I SAID THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE NOW SEEK WAYS IN WHICH TO HARMON No Objection to Declassification in Full 2013/01/03 : LOC-HAK-490-8-8-1 TURE TO CARRY ON THE WAR THE RISKS WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON HAS TAKEN TO ASSURE SUPPORT FOR HIS VIET-NAM POLICY, INCLUDING BOMBING AND MINING, HAVE BEEN VERY GREAT. IT HAS TAKEN BOTH COURAGE AND GREAT SKILL ON HIS PART TO ACCOMPLISH THIS. AS GENERAL HAIG EMPHASIZED, THE FACT IS THAT SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT NIXON IS DERIVED NOT FROM THE FACT THAT AMERICANS HAVE CHANGED THEIR MIND ABOUT THE WAR, BUT THAT IN SPIE OF IT HE WAS ABLE TO GO TO PEKING AND MOSCOW, WHICH HAS PERSUADED THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT HE CAN BRING ABOUT A MORE PEACEFUL WORLD.

7. THIEU TOOK NOTES AS I PROCEEDED AND THEN SAID THAT HE AGREED THAT THERE MUST BE NO PUBLIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN US AND THAT FOR HIS PART HE WOULD NOT PERMIT A PUBLIC DISAGREEMENT TO OCCUR. HE EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT WE HAD NOT GONE MORE DEEPLY
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I REPLIED THAT I THOUGHT THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS WERE MORE COMPLEX AND THAT ONCE THESE WERE SETTLED, THE SETTLEMENT OF THE MILITARY QUESTIONS WOULD FOLLOW MORE LOGICALLY.

8. HE THEN ASKED WHETHER YOU HAD EXPLAINED THE GVN PROPOSAL OF SEPTEMBER 13, FOR HE CONSIDERED THIS TO BE A VERY CONSIDERABLE ADVANCE OVER PREVIOUS PROPOSALS, PROVIDING AS IT DOES FOR A COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, A NEW GOVERNMENT IN WHICH ALL POLITICAL FORCES WILL BE REPRESENTED IN PROPORTION TO THE NUMBER OF POPULAR VOTES, THE RIGHT OF ALL POLITICAL FORCES TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT OR ELECTION TO POSITIONS IN GOVERNMENT. IF PROPOSALS ARE TO BE MADE PUBLIC, HE BELIEVED THAT PUBLIC OPINION OUTSIDE OF VIET-NAM WOULD CONSIDER IT A FORTHCOMING PROPOSAL AND WONDERED WHY WE HAD BEEN RELUCTANT TO PROPOSE IT.

9. I REPLIED THAT AS I HAD EXPLAINED TO HIM PREVIOUSLY, WE DID NOT BELIEVE IT TO BE SUFFICIENTLY FORTHCOMING TO ACHIEVE THE RESULTS WE BOTH WANTED NOR TO PUT THE OTHER SIDE ON THE DEFENSIVE. FURTHERMORE, AS A MATTER OF TACTICS WE HAD TRIED TO USE THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OTHER SIDE'S PROPOSAL WITHOUT ADOPTING ITS SUBSTANCE.

10. THIEU ASKED ME WHETHER I THOUGHT THE OTHER SIDE WOULD MAKE PUBLIC THEIR PROPOSAL BEFORE OUR ELECTION. I SAID THAT I ASSUMED THEY WOULD NOT DO SO UNLESS THERE WERE MUTUAL AGREEMENTS SINCE THERE HAD BEEN A DEFINITE UNDERSTANDING TO MAINTAIN THE PRIVACY OF THE TALKS.

11. THIEU THEN SAID THAT HE ALONE HAD TAKEN THE DECISIONS ON ALL OF OUR PREVIOUS PROPOSALS, BUT HE FELT THAT DEVELOPMENTS NOW MADE IT IMPERATIVE FOR HIM TO TAKE SOUNDINGS AMONG GOVERNMENT LEADERS. UNTIL NOW, HE HAD NOT HAD THE TIME TO DO THIS.

12. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE SHOULD CONCENTRATE NOW ON WORKING OUT OUR DIFFERENCES, THAT IT WAS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE TO LET THEM GET TO THE POINT OF ANY PUBLIC CONFRONTATION AND THAT HE AND I SHOULD WORK TOGETHER CLOSELY ON THIS OBJECTIVE. THIEU AGREED THAT WE MUST DO SO.

13. ASSESSMENT REQUESTED IS IN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MESSAGE.

14. WARM REGARDS.